

FOCUS ... On Human Services & Resources

**A Newsletter for Family & Consumer Sciences Teachers and
others interested in Human Services & Resources**

THIS I BELIEVE...

If you listen to public radio, you may have heard the series that is airing entitled *This I Believe*, in which individuals write and then deliver a short essay about something in which they believe strongly. The ones I have had the opportunity to listen to have provided insight into the core values of a wide variety of Americans from various backgrounds.

One way to gain an understanding of what a group of people believe is to conduct a survey. I am not certain of the validity or reliability of the 2005 FCS survey, but I certainly do appreciate the approximately 140 teachers who took the time to complete and return the survey sent earlier this fall. There was a nice representation, ranging from 24 to 43, from among each of the four classes of schools in our state.

The following statement was marked as either “strongly agree” or “agree” by 100% of the FCS teachers who responded to the survey:

- FCS classes provide opportunities to develop communication skills.

In addition, the following statements received only one “not sure” rating and the rest were either “strongly agree” or “agree”:

- FCS classes develop the problem solving skills of students.
- FCS classes develop the critical thinking skills of students.
- FCS classes address safety, health and environmental issues related to the specific content being studied.
- FCS classes support the achievement of reading and writing standards.

So, I believe that in addition to addressing the safety, health and environmental issues related to the specific content we teach, FCS teachers also provide students with opportunities to develop communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills and that FCS teachers reinforce and support the reading and writing standards.

I am just beginning to analyze the rest of the data, but again THANK YOU for providing me with a lot of information that can be used to improve the services and resources we provide to you and the information we provide from Nebraska to researchers across the nation.

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**NOVEMBER**

11-13 FCCLA Cluster Meeting, Houston TX and Hartford CT
18-20 FCCLA Cluster Meeting, Louisville KY and Albuquerque NM
30 FCS Workshop—ESU #9, Hastings

DECEMBER

6 FCS Workshop—ESU #7, Columbus
8 FCS Workshop—ESU #4, Auburn
8-10 ACTE National Convention, Kansas City MO

FEBRUARY

5-7 FCCLA Leadership Team Meetings
6 FCSTN Legislative Workshop

MARCH

24-25 NAFCS Annual Meeting, Omaha
31-Apr. 1 ProStart Culinary Competition

APRIL

10-11 FCCLA State Leadership Conference, Lincoln
26-29 ACTE Region 5 Meeting, Omaha

JUNE

5-8 Nebraska Career Education Conference, Kearney

JULY

9-13 FCCLA National Leadership Meeting, Nashville TN

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HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE ISSUES

In 1940, most working households consisted of a married couple with a single wage earner. Today, more and more households are headed by single parents and dual-income couples. The homes of most working Americans are empty during the day and chores wait to be completed until after business hours resulting in more complicated work-life balance issues.

Household structures:

- In 2003, married dual-earner households constituted 39.2% of all working households. Married single-earner households made up 18.3%, followed in descending order by individual males, individual females, unmarried female/household head and then unmarried male/household head.
- 51.5% of married dual-earner households had one or more children in the household.
- More women in dual-earner households are working full-time/full-year; 54.8% in 1993 compared to over 60% in 2003.

How workers spend their time at home and at work:

- Employed men work about an hour more than employed women on an average day of work (8.0 for men compared to 7.1 for women)
- Women spend about an hour more per day on household activities than men (2.67 hours compared to 1.57).
- The data suggests that the presence of children in the home impacts men and women differently. For women, the presence of children decreases the number of hours of employment and, in contrast, the presence of children increases the number of hours men work.
- Unmarried male household heads with children in the household worked more hours per week (42.6) than their male counterparts without children (40.4); unmarried female household heads worked an average of 37.7 hours per week compared to 37.9 hours for those without children.

WHAT IS WORRYING WORKERS?

A recent poll of 259 employees, conducted by Life-Care, Inc., a work/life benefits provider based in Connecticut, revealed the following worries:

- Finances—23%
- Job and career—21%
- Lack of control over own time—12%
- Issues with spouse or significant other—12%
- Child care and parenting issues—8%
- Personal issues—7 %
- Home maintenance—5%
- Medical issues—4%
- Elder care issues—3%
- Pets—1%
- Too stressed out to give any reasons—4%

Source: Lincoln Journal-Star, October 3, 2005, Page 4A

Employers are increasingly recognizing the need for benefits that enhance the abilities of the employees to balance their time to meet the needs to both work and family. The need for flexibility was the highest ranked need among employees in a 1998 survey of 614 companies.

- Time flexibility—which includes compressed workweek schedule and flextime options.
- Location flexibility—which includes access to telecommuting on either a full or part-time basis. In 2000, 4.2 million individuals worked at home most days; an additional 15 million reported working from home at least once a week.

The conclusion drawn by the authors is that the root of increasing difficulty in balancing work and family lies in the changing nature of households, rather than in increasing demands for work and that programs that provide flexibility are a key component.

Source: Shift in Household Structure at the Root of Work-Life Balance Issues. Employment Policy Foundation (2004, October 28). www.epf.org



SHOPPING... A CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Shopping is a favorite leisure activity for many people. It is a difficult activity for some people such as the elderly and busy, working parents. As a result there is an increasing number of people who are combining their love of shopping with a career choice.

Personal shoppers are more in demand than ever before. While some are employed by large stores, the majority are self-employed. Personal shoppers generally specialize, such as shopping for groceries and other items for senior citizens and other people who are home-bound. Others specialize in shopping for unique gifts for special occasions, such as weddings and/or holidays. Still others work for executives or businesses to purchase gifts for their employees or families. On the internet is a site with services from a personal wine shopper in the Napa Valley who writes that in their quest for the finest new releases, as many as 300 different wines are sampled each week.

Personal chefs are becoming more common. A personal chef shops and cooks for several families and generally goes weekly to the client's home and prepares several entrees and packages and stores the meals leaving heating instructions for the client.

The 1997 Economic Census (U.S. Census Bureau) listed \$2,670 firms in the miscellaneous personal-services category, which includes shopping services. The firms generated \$1.2 billion in sales and employed 25,526. One example is Laurie Ely who began a grocery-shopping service for elderly Chicago residents. She spends more than \$100,000 annually on behalf of clients filling phone orders three days a week while her children are in school. She charges \$8 per order plus a 15% commission, which provides her an income of about \$20,000 a year. Primary Source: www.startupjournal.com/columnists/startuplifestyle/20041214-lifestyle.html

CONSUMER SERVICES RESOURCE

The Center for Student Credit Card Education, Inc. offers a free credit card literacy program for high school juniors and seniors. The program teaches students how to wisely choose and responsibly use a credit card before they move on to college or join the workforce. Citi Cards, for the third year, is making the program available through a non-commercial, educational sponsorship. The 2006 program has been updated to include information on Identity Theft. The new Trainer's Guide now provides optional pre and post tests as well as suggested classroom activities.

Over the past two years, more than 550,000 students, in all fifty states, have participated in "The ABCs of Credit Card Finance." The curriculum, that takes a minimum of one hour of instruction time, includes:

- \$ A primer, *The ABCs of Credit Card Finance – Essential Facts for Students*. One primer is provided for each participating student.

- \$ A Trainer's Guide and a PowerPoint Presentation, which facilitate teaching the material. One set will be provided for teachers within a school. If sharing these publications proves to be cumbersome, teachers are free to duplicate them or they can be downloaded at: www.Students.UseCreditWisely.com.

Jobs related to credit cards:

Fraud Early Warning Clerk

Will perform a variety of tasks to aid the Fraud department in maintaining its regulatory, compliance, and timely reporting status. Responsibilities include project management, fraud reporting to the Association, coordination with other departments, monitor for charge postings, filing, heavy data entry and other miscellaneous duties.

Qualifications: Minimum one year fraud related experience desired. Outstanding organizational and time management skills mandatory. The qualified candidate will be highly motivated, a self-starter, flexible to changing priorities and able to multi task effectively. Strong attention to detail a must. A demonstrated ability to improve processes and increase effectiveness a plus.



Other Job Titles: Customer Service, Sales Unit Manager, Analyst/Tester/Developer



TEACHER CONCERN HELPS REDUCE ANTI-SOCIAL

BEHAVIOR AMONG TEENS

Having a teacher who students perceive cares is associated with lower rates of drug and sexual risk behaviors among high risk youth, according to a new study headed by a University of Chicago researcher. "Adolescents who reported low teacher connectedness were two times more likely to use marijuana and amphetamines, and two times more likely to be sexually active, have sex while high on alcohol or drugs, have a partner who was high on alcohol or other drugs during sex, and have multiple sexual partners," said Dexter Voisin, Assistant Professor in the University's School of Social Service Administration. Although other studies have found that behavior improves when schools show concern for students, the new report is the first to show a significant association between teacher connectedness and anti-social behavior among delinquent teens. The study underlines the importance of providing additional training for teachers in dealing with delinquent youth. Teachers and parents should be encouraged to have high expectations for students and schools should ensure that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school. "Other strategies most likely to improve school and teacher connectedness may include involving teachers as coaches and after-school leaders, and establishing cooperative learning where teachers use small groups of students as learning partners," Voisin said.

Source: <http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/05/051018.voisin.shtml>

*"The best index to a person's character is
how he treats people who can't do him any good,
and how he treats people who can't fight back."
Abigail Van Buren*

CLASSROOM COMPETITION

Many educators mistakenly believe that competition is the best way to push kids to make their best efforts. Teachers construct competitive activities because of this belief.

Alfie Kohn believes that competition does not motivate students to do their best, does not build students' character or self-esteem and does not help students build good social skills.

Marvin Marshall agrees that competition "dulls the spirits" of kids who find themselves outside the winner's circle. He continues that competition can be used to improve students' performance in extracurricular activities, but classroom competition is counter-productive. This is especially true when students are acquiring new knowledge and skills. For some students who strive to be at the top (and care about their class rank), ratings might be an incentive, but rankings and ratings often depress kids who have no chance of making it. In competitive classrooms, teachers and students focus on an extrinsic interest in winning rather than on an intrinsic interest in learning. That focus can lead to other problems, such as cheating. For kids who struggle to learn, competition can feel like constant punishment, and perpetuates the notion that school is unfair and unjust.

Source: <http://www.asbj.com/current/research.html>

BABIES AND LEARNING

Babies are far more sophisticated intellectually than once believed. Physicians are beginning to track emotional advance because research shows how powerful emotional well-being is to a child's future health. Doctors have begun to discover ways to tell if a baby as young as three months is showing early signs of possible psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, learning disabilities and perhaps autism. How children do on social, emotional and language skills are better predictors of adulthood success than are motor skills.

Source: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8852928/site/newsweek/>



NEBRASKA OFFICE OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Dispute Resolution Act, passed in 1991, established the Office of Dispute Resolution. Over the last eleven years, mediation centers have been created and a pool of mediators have been trained. Nebraska is the only state to systematically provide access to services to all of its citizens equally because the Act guarantees full access to mediation regardless of income. The courts and mediation centers are partners in providing dispute resolution services.

Six state-approved mediation centers serve every county across Nebraska. The centers have a staff from two to eight persons, plus a pool of volunteer mediators and paid mediators. There are also a number of independent mediators and arbitrators located throughout the state.

Center for Conflict Resolution
1524 Broadway
Scottsbluff NE 69363-0427
308.635.2002

Central Mediation Center
3720 Avenue A, Suite G
Kearney NE 68847
308.237.4692

Concord Center
3861 Farnam Street, Suite B
Omaha NE 68131
402.345.1131

Nebraska Justice Center
312 Main Street
Walthill NE
402.846.5576

The Mediation Center
1120 K Street, Suite 200
Lincoln NE 68508-2853
402-441-5740

The Resolution Center
5109 West Scott Rd-Suite 414
Beatrice NE 68310
402-223-6061

The types of services offered vary among the centers. These statistics from FY 2002-2003 illustrate the breadth of services:

Small Claim mediation—159 cases

Family/Divorce mediation—502 cases

Family Group Conferencing— 245 cases

Restorative Justice (Victim/Offender Mediation)—85 cases

Facilitations (group discussions)— 32

Special Education mediation—28 new cases; 246 total

Study Circles (conflict prevention related to race relations or tragic events)— data not available

Employment First mediation—32 cases

How do people become involved with mediation centers?

Of the known referrals, the courts are the single largest source of statewide referrals (32%); however, the entire legal system (courts, attorneys, probation, legal services and diversion services, represent 44% of all referrals.

Are clients satisfied with mediation services?

Of the 625 individuals who completed exit evaluations 89% were satisfied, 84% indicated that they preferred to go to mediation over other choices and 88% would recommend using mediation to solve disputes or conflicts.

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

- Anne Frank



. . .from the Official Nebraska Government Website
Nebraska Health and Human Services System

NEBRASKA CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

The Nebraska Child Death Review Team (CDRT) was established by the legislature in 1993. At that time about 300 children died each year in the state, but there was no process for determining the circumstances of those deaths. The purpose of the CDRT is to study the number and causes of deaths to children ages 0-17 and advise policymakers and the public on changes that might prevent them. On October 4, 2005 a report was released that identified the top ten causes of death for children in Nebraska from 1996-2001. It also provided some key recommendations related to prevention.

Pregnancy-Related—541 deaths

- 29% of these deaths were attributed to pre-maturity, maternal complications and events of labor and delivery.
- Among infant deaths, over half were to multiple gestation infants who are known to have both higher pre-maturity and mortality rates.

Birth Defects, Inherited and Chromosomal Disorders—380 deaths

- Heart defects were the largest category of lethal birth defects

Motor Vehicle-Related Incidents—259 deaths

- 84% of these deaths occurred while riding in a motor vehicle.
- The percentage of crashes where alcohol was involved increased over the six year period.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome—160 deaths

- The number of SIDS deaths has dropped by half since 1993.
- 14% of Nebraska's SIDS deaths occurred while the child was in a child care setting; an additional 10% occurred with a non-family member babysitter.

Infectious, Chronic and Other Medical Conditions—138 deaths

- Only one documented death was from a vaccine-preventable disease.
- There were 17 deaths attributed to asthma.

Unintentional Injuries—98 deaths

- Included in this category was drowning, suffocation, residential fires, being hit by a vehicle not in traffic and accidental hanging.

Suicide—70 deaths

- The age range for suicide was from 11 to 17.
- Over half used a firearm to commit suicide.

Cancer—64 deaths

- Cancer remained the most common cause of disease-related mortality.
- Leukemia and brain tumors was the most common causes of child cancer deaths

Homicide/Criminal Child Abuse and Neglect—63 deaths

- 32 children were shot, beaten or strangled in disputes with friends or peers.
- At least five were intentionally killed, caught up in disputes between their mothers and their current or former male partners.

Caretaker Neglect—29 deaths

- Two newborns were left without food and/or medical care.

For additional information and the recommendations for prevention, see:

<http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/CDRteam/>



FRANCHISING VS. INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES

A new franchise opens every eight minutes of every business day. Consumer sales at franchised businesses account for \$1.5 million in sales. Studies have shown that franchises have a 90% success rate as compared to an 18% success rate for independently-launched businesses.

Richard Rennick, chair of the International Franchise Association, likes to describe franchising as being in business for yourself, but not by yourself. With a franchise, new business owners are provided with the tools (the location, a marketing plan, operating manuals, training and development skills) that will better assure success, but it is still up to the entrepreneur to make it work.

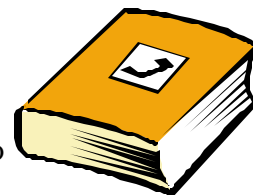
In a recent Gallup poll of franchisees, more than 94% considered themselves successful and more than 75% would purchase their franchise again.

Source: Hospitality News, (2005, October). pg. 1 and 12.

FOCUS . . . On Professional Development

I'm goin' to Kansas City. . . Kansas City, here I come!

At least that is true for individuals who are attending the ACTE national convention that will be held in Kansas City on December 8-10. Hurricane Katrina caused it to be moved from New Orleans to a location very close to us; it will likely not be held so close to Nebraska again. This is an excellent opportunity to experience a national professional development conference!



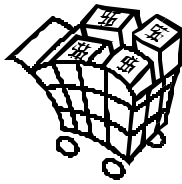
Keynoters: Thursday—Jennifer James, an anthropologist known for her innovative ideas on adapting to change and developing strong thinking skills will speak. Friday—Tom Vander Ark, Executive Director for the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, will share his perspective on education. Saturday—Loretta LaRoche, world renowned expert in field of stress management will present.

A few of the session titles of special interest to FCS teachers:

- Accessing Your Middle School CTE Program
- Career Aspirations of Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents
- Financial Education for Today
- Service-Learning in an Adolescent Development Course
- How do FCS Teachers Deal with Minor and Major Misbehavior
- Wearable Technology: Fashion Find or Flop.

For more information and online registration, go to: www.acteonline.org

Early registration has been extended until November 13;
after that date, the cost to attend will increase.



DO AMERICANS SHOP TOO MUCH?

This book published in 2000 begins with an essay written by Juliet Schor entitled “The New Politics of Consumption.” One of her main thesis is that “the new consumerism” that arose in the 1980’s is causing stress to individuals and families, harming the environment and weakening the public sector; therefore, there is a need to examine the sociological, political and economic behaviors of Americans related to consumption. Nine authors write shorter essays in which they respond to the ideas she presents and the book concludes with a reply from Juliet to the responses of those individuals. Here are a few thoughts from a variety of authors who contributed to this forum.

There has been a fundamental shift in income and wealth distribution in the last 30-40 years. Between 1945 and 1973, incomes grew at about 3% annual for families of all income levels. Since 1973 most earnings growth has gone to families at the top. The top 1% of earners have captured more than 70% of all earnings growth during the last two decades, while median real family income has been stagnant and the incomes of the bottom fifth have declined about 10%.
-Robert H. Frank (author of *Luxury Fever*)

“...the expansion of consumption has combined with the market system and open societies to drive down unit costs of goods and services to the point where yesterday’s luxuries are today’s affordable necessities.” -Jack Gibbons

Betsy Taylor states, “Americans are consuming like there may be no tomorrow. Our most popular national pastime is watching television, followed closely by recreational shopping.” Here are a few statistics from her writing that address the environmental impact of consumption. The US population is less than 5% of the world’s population, yet we consume nearly 30% of the global resources. Americans use twice as much energy and generate more than twice as much garbage as the average European. The average new house built in the US has doubled in size since 1970. One study has concluded that if everyone on earth consumed as the average North American does, we would need four extra planets to supply the resources and absorb the waste.

In the response entitled, “Leisure for All,” three authors speak about a vision focused on “quality of life” rather than “quantity of stuff.” They agree that the average American finds it harder to achieve a satisfying standard of living than was possible twenty-five years ago. They agree that there has been a loss of leisure time, but they feel that loss can be attributed to women entering the workforce and the increased number who are employed full time.

A few of the questions I began to ponder as I read:

1. Why do we shop so much? Is it based on a blurring of needs versus wants. . .or wanting to “keep up with the Joneses” who are increasingly portrayed on television as upper-middle income. . .or is it because there are just so many opportunities to shop?
2. To what degree is increased television viewing increasing our desire to consume?
3. What can we do to help people examine why they are equating an accumulation of stuff as a primary indicator of quality of life? Or to assume more ecologically-sustainable patterns of consumption?

Source: Schor, J. (2000). Do Americans Shop Too Much? Boston MA: Beacon Press.

In the Fall 2005 issue of Teaching Tolerance, a lesson plan entitled “What Borders Have You Crossed?” was shared to help students understand that almost all of us are immigrants or descendents of immigrants. Here is an adaptation of that strategy that incorporates content related to FCS.

Instructions: The teacher develops a matrix with headings appropriate to the topic being studied on the top horizontal axis and the name of each student on the vertical axis. Students are provided with a half-sheet of paper or an index card on which they write their personal responses and place them on the matrix. Students are then asked to look for similarities and differences and begin to formulate some generalizations. Each student writes a short essay summarizing what was learned as a result of this activity.

Name of Student	Our family is originally from . . .	Our family came to America . . .	One custom our family has continued is . . .	A food our family enjoys related to our heritage is . . .	People in my family have often worked as . . .
Example Brent	Germany	In the late 1800's to avoid military service. Joseph and Mary Koch had 8 sons who lived to early adulthood and as each was about to turn 18, they were sent to America to avoid conscription into the Prussian army	Family reunions—we celebrated the 75th consecutive one a few years back. Five of the 8 families were represented. Family History—each year we update the Koch Book.	Sausage (yummy) Dumplings and sauerkraut (I don't enjoy it, but they do!)	Farmers, preachers or teachers

What adaptations can you design related to:

- Housing
- Child rearing
- Clothing
- Foods
- Etc.

What key questions would you use during the similarities and differences discussion?

What strategies would you use to help students develop generalizations from the data in the chart?

What questions might you pose to cause students to reflect on this activity before they begin to write their summary?